United Nations A/53/PV.33

General Assembly

Fifty-third Session

Official Records

33rd plenary meeting
Thursday, 8 October 1998, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Opertti ..... (Uruguay)

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda item 15

Elections to fill vacancies in principal organs

(a) Election of five non-permanent members of the Security Council

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): This morning the General Assembly will proceed to the election of five non-permanent members of the Security Council to replace those members whose term of office expires on 31 December 1998.

The five non-permanent outgoing members are the following: Costa Rica, Japan, Kenya, Portugal and Sweden. Those five States cannot be re-elected and therefore their names should not appear on the ballot papers.

Apart from the five permanent members, the Security Council will include in 1999 the following States: Bahrain, Brazil, Gabon, the Gambia and Slovenia. The names of those States, therefore, should also not appear on the ballot papers.

Of the five non-permanent members which will remain in office in 1999, three are from Africa and Asia, one is from Eastern Europe and one is from Latin America and the Caribbean.

Consequently, pursuant to paragraph 3 of General Assembly resolution 1991 A (XVIII) of 17 December 1963, the five non-permanent members should be elected according to the following pattern: two from Africa and Asia, one from Latin America and the Caribbean and two from Western European and other States. The ballot papers reflect this pattern.

In accordance with established practice, there is an understanding to the effect that, of the two States to be elected from Africa and Asia, one should be from Africa and one from Asia.

I should like to inform the Assembly that the number of candidates, not exceeding the number of seats to be filled, receiving the greatest number of votes and a two-thirds majority of those present and voting will be declared elected.

In the case of a tie vote for a remaining seat, there will be a restricted ballot limited to those candidates which have obtained an equal number of votes.

May I take it that the General Assembly agrees to that procedure?

It was so decided.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): In accordance with rule 92 of the rules of procedure, the election shall be held by secret ballot, and there shall be no nominations.

98-86026 (E)

This record contains the original text of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned, *within one month of the date of the meeting*, to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, Room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

Regarding candidatures, I have been informed by the Chairmen of the respective regional groups that for the two vacant seats from among the African and Asian States there are two endorsed candidates, namely, Malaysia and Namibia.

As for the Latin American and Caribbean States, Argentina is the endorsed candidate for one vacant seat.

From among the Western European and other States, there are three candidates for two vacant seats. The candidates are Canada, Greece and the Netherlands.

I call on the representative of Swaziland on a point of order.

Mr. Dlamini (Swaziland): Perhaps members are surprised that something unusual is happening today. This relates to the circumstances. A renowned scholar and lover of African literature by the name of Chinua Achebe has said, "When you see a frog crossing your path, you must know that something is behind its life".

My delegation has asked to make a few remarks; in a way, I am uttering a prayer on behalf of my delegation, that as we elect the new members of the Security Council may God the Almighty give them wisdom as they carry out the laborious tasks that lie before them. I want also to alert them to the obstacles they will meet when they get to the Security Council. Experience during my time here dictates that they should be vigilant lest their purposes and aims be interrupted in the Security Council when they set about discharging their duties.

First, as is well known, the Security Council is by no means supreme vis-à-vis the General Assembly; it is expected to be accountable to the Assembly; it is expected to be transparent in its activities. Hence, its operations should be well known to us all, including to non-members of the Council. That, according to the Charter, should be done by making the debate a public one at times. But to the dismay of my delegation, we have time and again seen meetings of the Security Council conducted behind what I may be permitted to call an iron curtain, loosely known as informal consultations.

When one follows matters, slowly and carefully, in the corridors, one learns that these are not just informal consultations, but meetings on matters of significance, on which we would all be as interested as members of the Security Council to make our views known.

My delegation challenges the practice of informal consultations. Normal practice dictates that informal consultations in the consultations room should be followed by open meetings in which we can all request to participate in an open debate. Therefore, to my colleagues and to the Member States who will be going to the Security Council, I reiterate my preambular prayer that God Almighty give them power and courage so that the practice of informal consultations and informal meetings may come to an end, and so that the culture of the United Nations may be properly followed.

We are about to exercise our right to vote, and I call upon those who will be voting, which includes my delegation, to pray for the courage to vote for those who will heed all our requests. We are about to give birth to a child; if the child is born, it is expected to take instructions from the parents. So it is for the Security Council; it must take heed of the General Assembly, which is the supreme body of the United Nations.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): In accordance with rule 92 of the rules of procedure, we shall proceed now to the election by secret ballot.

Ballot papers marked "A", "B" and "C" will now be distributed.

I request representatives to use only those ballot papers that have been distributed and to write on them the names of the five States for which they wish to vote.

A ballot paper containing more names from the relevant region than the number of seats assigned to it will be declared invalid. Names of Member States on a ballot paper which do not belong to that region will not be counted.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Holíková (Czech Republic), Mr. Juárez (Mexico) and Mr. Chang (Republic of Korea) acted as tellers.

A vote was taken by secret ballot.

The meeting was suspended at 10.40 a.m. and resumed at 11.20 a.m.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): The result of the voting is as follows:

Group A — African and Asian States

Number of ballot papers:	176
Number of invalid ballots:	0
Number of valid ballots:	176
Abstentions:	0
Number of Members voting:	176
Required two-thirds majority:	118
Number of votes obtained:	
Malaysia	174
Namibia	167
Philippines	1
Senegal	1
Zimbabwe	1

Group B — Latin American and Caribbean States

Number of ballot papers:	176
Number of invalid ballots:	0
Number of valid ballots:	176
Abstentions:	4
Numbers of Members voting:	172
Required two-thirds majority:	115
Number of votes obtained:	
Argentina	171
Chile	1

Group C — Western European and other States

Number of ballot papers:	176
Number of invalid ballots:	0
Number of valid ballots:	176
Abstentions:	1
Numbers of Members voting:	175
Required two-thirds majority:	117
Number of votes obtained:	
Canada	131
Netherlands	122
Greece	87

Having obtained the required two-thirds majority, the following States were elected members of the Security Council for a two-year term beginning 1 January 1999: Argentina, Canada, Malaysia, Namibia and the Netherlands.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I congratulate the States which have been elected members of the Security Council. I also thank the tellers for their assistance in this important election.

This concludes our consideration of sub-item (a) of agenda item 15.

Programme of work

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I should like to draw the attention of the General Assembly to document A/INF/53/3/Add.1, which covers the period from 8 October through 3 November. Attention of members is drawn particularly to the change of schedule on the consideration of agenda item 11, "Report of the Security Council". Instead of being taken up on Monday, 12 October, agenda item 11 will now be taken up on Wednesday, 21 October.

Other than the items already cited in the previous programme of work, the lists of speakers for the additional items mentioned in document A/INF/53/3/Add.1 will be open as of Friday, 9 October.

The General Assembly, in due course, will be kept informed of the dates for the consideration of other agenda items as well as of any additions or changes.

The meeting rose at 11.30 a.m.